World Is Covered

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World Is Covered

by air_of_the_Waterfall

Summary

He watched the clouds, and as they wandered on a spring breeze, he followed them home.

Notes

This one is quite different from the rest of the series so far. The title is from “Through the Eyes of A Child” by AURORA :)

"He's a monster. I think of him as one of those pitiful things that are born in hospitals from time to time. They feed it, and keep it warm, but they don't put it on the machines and it dies. Lecter is the same way in his head, but he looks normal and nobody could tell."

. . .

Hannibal Lecter did not scream when he entered the world. Nurses fussed over him and cleaned him up, then set him in his mother's arms where he would stay for the next several weeks. Every time his father or a nanny tried to extricate him from his bundle of hand-knitted blankets, he would quietly snuffle and sob until Simonetta couldn't bear to leave. She took pity on him, a tiny pink creature torn from someplace else and forced into a world too busy and cold. She didn't let him go, even when she couldn't keep up with his appetite; he was a greedy thing. Regardless, she rested him on her shoulder and patted his back, gently kissing his ears as he opened and closed his hands around the neckline of her dress.

He slept for most of the day, twitching sporadically as his brain began to fire and map its territory, gleefully experimenting with each digit and nerve. Simonetta sat by the cradle and rocked it gently while Hannibal stared up at his painted sky. As long as she remained in his sight, she found that she could lay him down and stretch her arms, but she still never looked away. He was usually chewing on the corner of a blanket, eyes wandering and curious when they weren't closed and fluttering.

Once, he woke to his father entering the room: expensive leather shoes on polished, firelit wood. Count Lecter smelled of candles, damp stone, and oil paint. He tried to reason with his wife, and Hannibal's memory offered up the conversation in his native tongue. The words often felt like far-away smoke, but they were still there.

"Darling, he needs to get used to being alone. Even just for an hour at a time. Doesn't it disturb you that he hardly cries?"

Simonetta smiled, and it smoothed her voice into the lilt that Hannibal liked best. "Isn't that a good thing?"

"The staff are beginning to talk. They cross themselves and mutter prayers when you walk the halls. The castle is cloaked in a veil of… general unease. Something about him isn't right."

"Won't you say your own son's name, Richard? You've done nothing to bond with him."

She picked Hannibal up and he settled against her chest where he belonged, among her perfect bouquet of vanilla, milk, and lavender. Richard's scent took a reflexive step back, and the air shivered.

"How can I when you never put him down? You hardly even sleep anymore."

“Do you believe him to be the devil? Is that what they’re all whispering? Shame on you. Of course he reacts when his own father rejects him on a flight of fancy!”

Richard sighed. “You know him best. Can you honestly promise me that you don’t sense it? You can’t see when you look him in the eyes that he’s something… other? Perhaps we’d be wise to…”

Simonetta stared, unblinking. Her chest stilled and the constant gentle rocking ceased. Something in Hannibal shifted, then. He looked up at his mother and one of her warm tears landed on his forehead. She swiped it away with a thumb, trembling.

“Kill him?” she hissed. “You would take him from me? From the world we were tasked to bring him into?

“Tell me why you cling to him so tightly.”

“Because he’s my baby!”

She stood there for a while, staring at her husband and crying silently. Eventually, she added in barely a whisper, “I’m afraid of what will happen if I let him go. If I… unleash him on the world, what will I be responsible for?”

Richard reached for her, but she didn’t let him get close. “See? Darling…”

Hannibal could feel his mother’s heartbeat speeding up, determined, and he nuzzled closer. This was home. This would always be home.

“ *No* ! Absolutely not. I can’t believe you’d even suggest…” They were moving, clouds drifting above Hannibal’s head. He watched a distant bird that may have been a spider. Simonetta turned one last time and snarled, “We never had this conversation.”

Hannibal did not see his father again for several weeks after that.

Now he watched the sky again, bright blue and finally free of snow, the grass around him lush and dewy. His much longer limbs unfurled in a pile of blankets that he’d hauled out to the field in pajamas, but the only space he occupied was the amount his lungs could hold. Earth constantly expanded and roiled in place, turning like a mobile just for him: the little fallen angel who scorched it to the touch.

Clean wind whispered in his ears. Mama was singing him a lullaby, waiting for him up there, but for now he was pleased to stay where he was.

“Hannibal?”

He turned his head towards his name with a sleepy blink. Blobs in the corner of his eye may have been a house, and the smaller one a person. It drew closer and materialized into a familiar face before kneeling beside him.

“Hannibal? I caught some fish for lunch.”

He didn’t understand the words, but the voice was safe so he went back to sucking on his pacifier.

“Do you want to be alone?”

The sky disappeared for a split second while Hannibal blinked.

“Okay… I’ll go inside.”

He moved to leave, but Hannibal whimpered in distress and reached out with grabby hands until the other person came back. Then, he settled again and closed his eyes.

“Oh!” The voice held a smile. “Okay, I understand.”

Will . This was Will. Safe.

Will adjusted himself on the blankets and gathered Hannibal in his arms. His chest wasn’t soft like Mama’s, but Hannibal snuggled close anyway with a contented sigh. Will seemed nervous and tense, but it quickly passed. The clouds marched on, morphing into increasingly abstract blurs, and Will followed Hannibal’s eyes before looking back down and gently stroking his hair.

“I’m not sure how to handle this,” Will admitted. “I guess you’re a baby today. I didn’t know you could do that.”

A few minutes carried gentle silence.

“You mentioned cloud watching a while ago. I should have thought to take you out here sooner…” Will rested his chin on Hannibal’s head. “I know how much you loved your mother. I’m glad you remember her. I’m sorry she isn’t here. Maybe when you’re big again you can tell me more about her. Tell me how to take care of you. I know I’ll never be… you know, your parents, but I’m here. I’m so grateful to them, Hannibal. I hope they would have liked me.”

Hannibal wasn’t processing the words, but they lodged somewhere distant in his brain to recall later. For now, Will held his hand and rubbed a thumb over his knuckles while he approached sleep. He watched the clouds, and as they wandered on a spring breeze, he followed them home.

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